

ROLAND E. BURR
USS *OKLAHOMA*, SURVIVOR

#258

INTERVIEWED ON
DECEMBER 6, 1998
BY JEFF PAPPAS

TRANSCRIBED BY:
CARA KIMURA
OCTOBER 14, 1999

Roland Burr (RB): ...and I was born December 19, 1921.

Jeff Pappas (JP): Very good, how was that...

RB: I served on the USS *Oklahoma*, Big BB-37.

(Inaudible)

JP: The following oral history interview was conducted by Jeff Pappas, for the National Park Service, USS *Arizona* Memorial, at the Imperial Palace Hotel, in Las Vegas, Nevada, on December 6, 1998 at ten a.m. The person being interviewed is Mr. Roland E. Burr who was at or on board the USS *Oklahoma* on December 7, 1941.

For the record, would you please state your full name, place of birth, and the date?

RB: My name is Roland, Roland E. Burr. I was born on December the nineteenth, 1921.

(Inaudible)

JP: Okay, for the record would you please state your full name, your place of birth and the date?

RB: My name is Roland E. Burr. I was born in Ringsted, Iowa on December 19, 1921.

JP: Perfect. Can you tell me what you considered your hometown in 1941?

RB: My hometown in '41 was Strang, Nebraska.

JP: Can you tell me a little bit about your time prior to serving at Pearl Harbor? Your hometown in [*Nebraska*], where you went to school, your experience there.

RB: I went to high school, not in my hometown, but a little town by the name of Geneva, Nebraska. They provided a lot more education than that reading and writing and arithmetic, so I took shorthand and typing, and I did pretty good at school. I thought I did, anyway. I graduated.

JP: That's good. What year did you graduate?

RB: I graduated in 1939.

JP: And this high school was in Geneva?

RB: Geneva, Nebraska.

JP: Geneva, Nebraska. There you took shorthand and you developed some skills that you would later use in your experience at Pearl Harbor.

RB: Through - by having shorthand and that, the captain who used to come around on the inspections and he would stop and talk to me. One day he asks me, he says, "Mr. Burr, would you like to be a yeoman? I need a yeoman in my office."

And I said, "Yes sir, Captain."

JP: This was probably before meeting the captain, after you'd - how long was it after you graduated from high school that you joined the military?

RB: I graduated in May of 1939 and I went into the service August 6, 1941.

JP: Did you enlist or were you...

RB: I enlisted in the service. Things were rough back there. I was living with my father on a farm and we had very poor crops. The weather was so dry. So I didn't think I could make a living for myself and my family with my folks. So I went into the service. My mother, she just about disowned me for going into the service. But I felt this way, if there's something that's going to happen, I'll get a jump on it, and which I really did, it helped.

JP: Well, did you anticipate that something would happen at that time? Did you hear any rumors about possible war?

RB: Well, the war was going on in Europe and I went – right after school, I went to work with my uncle in Iowa up 'til Christmas time. And I wanted to go back and my mother wouldn't let me go back there. We stayed home. So I waited around until the spring of the year and in the early fall, I went down to a little town and enlisted in the navy.

JP: How did you tell your mother about the enlistment?

RB: She got over it.

JP: She got over it. Was she upset at first?

RB: Beg your pardon?

JP: Was she upset at first?

(Inaudible)

JP: Now, you told your mother about your enlistment. Did she take it easily or did she take it hard?

RB: She took it very hard.

JP: What was her objection?

RB: Well, I told her, I said, "I've already signed up at the office."

They had to sign the papers. I just couldn't go on my own because I was a minor.

JP: How old were you at the time?

RB: I was eighteen, I believe it was.

JP: So your mother didn't take it that well, but you went on to the service anyway?

RB: Yeah.

JP: Tell me a little bit about after that, when you enlisted, you went off to basic training.

RB: I went on to - this is a little town by the name of Beatrice, was our substation.

JP: Beatrice in the state...

RB: Beatrice, Nebraska.

JP: Nebraska.

RB: And I went to - and then they sent me up to Omaha and I took a physical up in Omaha and I signed up. And they shipped us to Great Lakes and I went through training at Great Lakes.

JP: Great Lakes?

RB: Illinois.

JP: Illinois. So you went through basic training in Great Lakes?

RB: Yes sir.

JP: And you get out of basic training and then you were stationed?

RB: I'll tell you, they needed people pretty bad because they moved our – the company ahead of us up, the company behind us up and they got nine companies, and they sent us to the West Coast to catch a ship. And I was placed on the USS *Oklahoma*.

JP: And which month was this?

RB: This was in October.

JP: Of nineteen...?

RB: Forty.

JP: Of 1940. So there had been some general unrest in the military as early as 1940. Had you heard any rumors up at that point? Were you preparing for potential conflict with Japan?

RB: No. I still didn't – I didn't quite catch that.

JP: In 1940, were you preparing, did you hear any rumors about potential...

(Inaudible)

JP: So we're now in California and this is in late 1940, and you're heading off to Hawaii for some more training. Tell me about your experience in Hawaii, during those initial training sessions.

RB: Oh, we went out to sea but we [*came*] in on a weekend, about every third weekend. Out there we trained with our gunnery and exercises, engineering exercises and so forth. And it was really a good place to train because the weather was so wonderful. And I was, when I first went aboard there, I was on the deck force and I was on the three-inch gun and I was a loader on a three-inch gun. And believe it or not, those little – they're small shells but they really get up there.

JP: So at this time you're on the USS *Oklahoma* training.

RB: Yes, that's correct.

JP: Tell me about some of your colleagues, some of the friends that you had met on the *Oklahoma*.

RB: One of the best friends was from a little town called Minto, North Dakota. He's a real husky guy. We used to go ashore a lot. We had about – you always pick two or three people with you to get in with. But I don't know, I had a lot of friends on there. If I had any enemies, I don't know who they were.

JP: So you're training now. How long did your training take in Hawaii when you were actually ready for the service?

RB: How long did we train in Hawaii?

JP: Yes.

RB: Well, like I [*said*], we'd go out to sea and come in about every third weekend for liberty and then go back out again the next week.

JP: So you stayed exclusively on the USS *Oklahoma* in Hawaii? Was that your – that was what you did?

RB: Yes.

JP: Okay. So now we're getting into 1941 now and you're still in Hawaii, on the USS *Oklahoma*. Tell me about preparations, a little bit before the actual attack. What were you doing? What were some of your activities? Was it just status quo or did you do anything unusual or anything interesting?

RB: Oh, well, we did a lot of training out there. I know at one time, one of the spotters up on top of the mast come in and he said they spotted a submarine out there.

JP: When was this? Do you remember the day that this happened?

RB: It was about August, I believe it was in '41 and well, not that we knew anything about the Japanese, because...but we had training. They took airplanes and stuff of Japanese and we'd spot 'em, which was which. And so we were familiar with 'em.

JP: Tell me a little bit more about the submarine, about spotting the submarine.

RB: The guy up on the top, he spotted a sub out there and we didn't have any submarines in the area. But it just sort of washed off, nobody - there wasn't a big issue out of it.

JP: What was your duty at that time? What were you doing on ship?

RB: I was doing my regular duties. Taking care of correspondence and things like that and we trained - have gunnery training.

JP: So at this time, were you working as the captain's writer at this time, in August of 1941?

RB: Yes, I was captain's writer at that time. I just made third class.

JP: Tell me how you got that position, how you got your job.

RB: Captain used to come about up on the boat deck when I was a seaman and he'd come around and check on shining the bright work. One day he come up to me and he says, I remember he says, "How would you like to be a captain's writer?"

I says, "Yes sir, Captain," 'cause I always wanted to get into the office. Deck force wasn't for me.

And so he - I told him, "Captain," I [*said*], "I could take typing and shorthand."

He [*said*], "You can?"

And I said, "Yes sir."

It wasn't two weeks later; I was in the captain's office.

JP: And who was the captain at the time?

RB: The captain was E. J. Foy, F-O-Y.

JP: Can you tell me a little bit about Captain Foy?

RB: He was a wonderful man. Everybody liked him. He had the morale of the crew at the top. Couldn't get any better.

JP: And you personally liked him? You liked him personally?

RB: Oh, I surely did. He was a wonderful man.

JP: Well, tell me some of the duties that you performed as the captain's writer for Captain Foy.

RB: I took shorthand, wrote letters for him. And he wasn't a great one to write a lot of letters.

JP: So I guess he dictated to you?

RB: He dictated, yeah, I transcribed it and we'd send 'em out.

JP: Did Captain Foy have any other captain's writers on his staff?

RB: No, that's the only one. We had two other yeomen on the staff, but they just did administrative type work.

JP: I see. Okay, so now you're on the USS *Oklahoma*, this is in August or September of 1941. You're the captain's writer (inaudible). Tell me about the events leading up to the attack.

RB: Well, we would - like I [*said*], we would go out and train and do our work outside of Pearl. We'd come in. Just before, about three weeks before Pearl, while we were out on a night maneuver with the *Arizona* and Captain Kidd. He was in charge of BATDIVTWO (*Battleship Division Two*).

JP: He was on the *Arizona* at that time?

RB: He was on the *Arizona*. And we [*were*] maneuvering and we brushed into the *Arizona*. They had the admiral on board, so who got the responsibility on the wreckage? Our captain and our navigator were both subject to a general court martial.

JP: And this was Captain Foy?

RB: This was Captain Foy.

JP: The man you were...

RB: So they replaced him on the ship and put on Captain Bode.

JP: Can you spell his last name? Do you remember his last name, the spelling?

RB: Bode, B-O-D-E.

JP: So tell me about Captain Bode. So he replaced Captain Foy. This was about three weeks before Pearl Harbor.

RB: Right.

JP: Tell me about Captain Bode. Did you continue working as the ship's writer for Captain Bode?

RB: Yes.

JP: Okay, tell me about...

RB: He was a hard person to work for, very hard. I used to go out on inspection parties with him. And I'm not going to say any more, 'cause it won't be good. (Chuckles)

(Inaudible)

JP: So now this is about two to three weeks before the attack on Pearl Harbor. You're now writing, you're the captain's writer for Captain Bode and tell me about - let's skip up a couple of weeks and go right to the morning of the attack on Pearl Harbor. What were you doing that morning?

RB: We were scheduled - we came in that weekend and we were going to have an admiral's inspection by Captain Kidd, who was BATDIVTWO commander on the *Arizona*. And I was in the captain's office that morning and I heard - oh, I guess it was about ten minutes to eight o'clock or quarter to eight. Why, I heard a lot of noise going on and I went out the door in the captain's office and I looked over at Ford Island and they had been bombed. And so I went back to where I was and I look out the porthole and there was this airplane coming in from [*Merry*] Point Landing and it came over there, why, I noticed it had a bomb underneath, which turned out to be a torpedo. And it [*came*] by - we were in the front ship and he turned that torpedo - we took the first one. And when he turned the wing up on the plane, why, I see that circle. And my first thought was, "What is Roosevelt doing?" 'Cause we had a good idea of it, so...

JP: You had a good idea that something was going to happen?

RB: Coming up. And they were negotiating in Washington, which we didn't know anything about that. But anyway, we took seven torpedoes that morning. And every time one torpedo would hit, it would jerk the ship. And I've been told by other people that we took more than that, but I counted 'em. And I'll verify it from the fellow, photographer who was on Ten-Ten dock, over by the shipyard. And he was taking pictures that morning. He was a first class photographer. And I asked him, I said, "How many torpedoes did the *Oklahoma* take?"

And he told me, "Seven."

And that's what I counted. But later on, it shows the damage on the ship that there could possible have been one or two more. And after we took these torpedoes, why I started off over the side and climbing on the bottom of the ship over going toward the *Maryland*. The USS *Maryland* was tied up

alongside of us and they had been to the states in the yard and they had some one-point-one Bofors, which is a very good anti-aircraft gun.

But anyway, I started over the side, started going over toward the side and this lieutenant [*came*] by and he pulled his forty-five out and he [*said*], "Sonny, where you going?"

And I [*said*], "I'm not going anywhere."

I turned around I went back. I didn't want to get shot.

JP: But you were en route – you were thinking about going over to the *Maryland*?

RB: Right.

JP: And you were (inaudible)

RB: A little later, they had lines over. A little later, when I went up on the side, crawled up the line to the *Maryland*, he was ahead of me. So I never thought – but anyway, I went aboard the *Maryland*, and I was productive because I passed ammunition for these 1.1 guns. So take 'em up to the guns and fire it. And I spent all the battle up there.

And I'll tell you one little incident that scared me to death. I had seen the *Arizona* hit below. I'd seen it; I was looking right at it. And they were two ships behind us. So I...one of these boxes of ammunition went – where the line into from pulling it up and it went all the way down to – it [*came*] off and went all the way down to the magazine. And my heart just about stopped because I could see us blowing to kingdom come, but it didn't happen.

JP: This was on the *Maryland*?

RB: What? Oh, the *Maryland*.

JP: This was on the *Maryland*. Tell me about the *Oklahoma*, though, at this time.

RB: The *Oklahoma* was rolling over. See, when [we] took those seven torpedoes, it opened up a hole, it took water in. We didn't have any – all the voids were open because they were having – ready for inspection. And so nothing to keep it from counter flooding. Normally, you could've counter flooded it and it would set down like the rest of 'em, but we had no way of doing that. So it just rolled over.

JP: So this went down...

RB: It was forty-seven feet of water.

JP: So how long did it take the *Oklahoma* to capsize?

RB: I think it was about fifteen minutes, total.

JP: So from the first bomb attack...

RB: Yeah.

JP: ...torpedo attack...

RB: Yeah.

JP: Around eight o'clock.

RB: When we settled on the bottom upside-down.

JP: So it took about fifteen minutes for the *Oklahoma* to capsize.

RB: Yes.

JP: So in this time, the *Oklahoma* had taken seven torpedoes...

RB: That's correct.

JP: ...in the fifteen minutes. What was going through your mind during those fifteen minutes time before you jumped ship over to the *Maryland*?

RB: Well, I - people were right in the water with oil all over 'em and everything. I was fortunate. I don't know how I got across there without being full of oil. Of course, my uniform was ruined. But after the thing was over with on the *Maryland*, I went over to Ford Island. I walked over the lines from there over to Ford Island and I stayed there for that night.

While I was at Ford Island, I slept on the messdecks, on the floor, the cement floor. And I don't know, it must have been one, two o'clock in the morning, they had some planes come in and I think off of a carrier and boy everybody was trigger happy. And they - I think they shot one or two of them down. But a guy [*came*] running across that messdecks and he planted his number twelve right on my stomach where I was.

JP: These were American planes that they shot down.

RB: Yes, they were American planes.

JP: Were they B-17's coming in from...

RB: No, this wasn't the B-17 though. I think this was some carrier planes of the carriers that were out. They were flying them in.

JP: And they were coming back.

RB: But everybody was trigger-happy. They figured that the Japs were coming in.

JP: So how long did you spend – how much time did you spend on the *Maryland* helping out with the anti-aircraft ammunition?

RB: I think I got aboard the *Maryland* right close to quarter after eight. And I stayed there 'til 9:30 that morning.

JP: Nine-thirty.

RB: 'Cause that's when – they had a lot of the high level bombers come in, the second wave or something like that.

JP: The second wave came in, I think, at 8:55.

RB: Yeah.

JP: So you stayed on the *Maryland* until 9:30.

RB: About 9:30.

JP: What did you do after 9:30?

RB: Then I went over to Ford Island, got over there, got me some dry clothes. And I think I helped carry some of the people that were dead and wounded over to the ferry and they put 'em on, took 'em over to the hospital. And then we opened – the next day; we opened up a little office over on the submarine base for the *Oklahoma* people. All our boys off the ship went to – would go over to the dock and they'd catch a ship, a destroyer, cruisers and got out. We had a hard time arranging for 'em.

One thing I did do and I was really glad I got into, we typed up the muster list of all the people off the *Oklahoma*.

JP: Tell me about the muster list.

RB: Well, the names of everybody to send into Washington. And I got to type it up.

JP: Well, you were the ship's writer.

RB: Yeah.

JP: The captain's writer. So they had given you that responsibility.

RB: So I typed the list up of all those that were alive and all those that were dead.

JP: On the *Oklahoma*?

RB: On the *Oklahoma*. And then we put the ships that they went to, if we knew what they were. We had spotters out there all the time, checking them, checking our people.

JP: Spotters?

RB: Well, I mean they had different ones on our ship, "Hey did you see so-and-so?"

"Oh yeah, he went aboard the USS *Helena*," or something like that, I mean wherever they went aboard. They went aboard different ships. And we typed the name, the ship they went on, if we knew. There was no guesswork to it. I mean, they either knew or they didn't.

JP: Right. Were those persons, had they been assigned that responsibility prior to the attack, if an attack occurred, or that's just by word of mouth that you heard about this, where the folks from the *Oklahoma* had gone to, the ships?

RB: Well, if somebody off the *Okla*-...most of them were people off the *Oklahoma* knew where or found out so-and-so went and where they went. And there was a lot of 'em. Four hundred some of 'em, as you well know, (inaudible).

Can I tell you a little story about what just happened?

JP: Yes.

RB: We put a monument at the capitol in Oklahoma City, in the month of November of this year. Put the names of all those that were killed and it's there for posterity.

JP: And you were involved in that effort?

RB: Yes.

JP: What was your role?

RB: We held a meeting up there in about May and contracted for the fellow to do the work. We gave him the names and everything of these people. And a lot of the family members were there, people that were family, and they were very appreciative of this. And we got all the work done, now we got to - and we got most of the bills paid, but we still [*have*] some money in the kitty we got to dispense so I'm on the board to help get rid of that. And we want to get it to the right people, the people [*that are*] supposed to have it.

JP: Excellent. Now, tell me now about your continued service in the military, after Pearl Harbor.

RB: After Pearl, I stayed over in Hawaii 'til May. I went aboard a destroyer and I was on there a little while. And I was at Tenth Naval District headquarters. And the way I got out of the Tenth Naval District headquarters, I was shipping navy

wives back to the States – I was working with that. And everything went fine until one day an admiral's wife came up.

JP: Remember the admiral's name?

RB: I don't know what – don't remember his name now. Admiral's wife come up and she said she was going on that ship. And I said, "Ma'am, that ship is full."

Being a stupid sailor, I should have kept my mouth shut. But I didn't, and I got a set of orders out of Pearl, back to the States to get new construction. I ended up at San Francisco at this receiving station and they had a job for me. So they put me on a mine sweep up in Bainbridge Island, in Washington, the USS *Pursuit*. And I was up there and I really wanted to go aboard that ship, because we had a wonderful captain.

JP: What was his name?

RB: Gosh, I can't – I'm poor with names, I can't remember his name. He was a wonderful guy anyway. And actually he was in the reserve, but he was a graduate in the naval academy and I learned a lot from him. And then the shipyard was very slow of getting things done, so in October – this was in July – in October, they transferred me back to the San Francisco area to put another ship in commission.

JP: This was 1942?

RB: This was in '42, October 31, '42, the USS *Crater* was commissioned and I was aboard it as a plank owner. And we went over to the South Pacific and the merchant ships would come in the South Pacific and they'd take their cargo and dump it on us and we'd take it up to the front lines. We were very lucky.

JP: So, by this time, had your future wife started writing to you?

RB: Yes. This was on - we were still on the *Oklahoma* when I - this boy, Ray Wosick was his name, and he was a very good friend of mine. So he sent a list of names back to Minto, North Dakota.

JP: Remember how to spell your friend's last name?

RB: W-O-S-I-C-K. He's a chapter president for the Milwaukee chapter. And anyway - let's see, where was I? Anyway, when I got back down there, we got on board this *Crater*; we went over to the South Pacific. We went to MI-LEE, Efate and Espiritu Santo. I played a lot of baseball in Espiritu Santo against the Air Force.

JP: Before we talk about baseball, which I'm interested in, but this time though, your future wife is beginning to write to you? She had written to you...

RB: Yes.

JP: ...on the *Oklahoma*?

RB: We were...

JP: Tell me about that whole process. I'm very interested in that process.

RB: Well, he...

JP: You hadn't met yet, had you?

RB: Yeah. Wosick got the names - the girls wanted just somebody to write to. So he got the names of about seven or

eight of us and sent 'em back to the high school. Well, my wife...

JP: High school?

RB: It was a high school in Minto. And so he passed out the names and when they first came in and my wife was sick and she didn't get in on the first bunch and there [were] two names left when she got a hold of 'em and one of 'em was Oscar ZOH-BUL. I remember that, he's a good friend of mine. And my name. And taking a name like ZOH-BUL, she didn't want [any] part of it, so we wrote to her and we wrote all during the war. I used to send 'em - I used to get letters from her and I'd answer right away. But we wrote a lot of letters.

JP: So it's three and a half years of writing to a person you had never met before and you end up marrying this person.

RB: Well, when I got back to the States in '45, instead of going home to my parents, I went up to see her in North Dakota. And my parents lived in Missouri, Hale. And then I went home to Hale. And then spring of the year - or in the summer, I guess it was a year - in July, she came out to see me on the West Coast. And I convinced her not to go home. So her mother come out to see what was going on. And so I made a hit with her mother.

JP: What was your wife's maiden name, her full name?

RB: Rita J. Lizakowski, L-I-Z-A-K-O-W-S-K-I.

JP: And where she is from?

RB: A real Polish name.

JP: Where was she from?

RB: Where is she from? Minto, North Dakota.

JP: So she's now in San Francisco with you. Her mother's now - her mother came out to chaperone her.

RB: Yeah.

JP: And so now you're courting.

RB: Yeah. And then her mother got on the phone and she called her father and her father had to come out and see what's going on. 'Cause they didn't know me except for the letters. Her mother used to read the letters. So they [*came*] out and we got married. And they went back home.

JP: What was the day you got married?

RB: August the [*eleventh, 1945*].

JP: Forty-five?

RB: Forty-five, yeah.

END OF TAPE #1

TAPE #2

JP: The war is almost over. It's been over in Europe now for a few months. It's about to be over in the Pacific in September of '45 when they signed on the *Missouri*. You're married. Tell me about your family now, your family life after the war.

RB: We lived in Alameda. And after we got married, I was at *Shoemaker*. We decommissioned *Shoemaker* and I was

stationed at Alameda. And we had one child, a daughter.
And so...

JP: When was she born?

RB: She was born May the fourth, 1946. And so I [*stuck*] around there a while and then I went - when I was in Alameda, I loved it there. It was a good duty.

JP: Well first tell me the name of your daughter. What did you name her? The name of your daughter?

RB: Bonnie Louise, Bonnie Lou. And we got - after that, well, I stayed around there a while and finally, in '48, I decided to get out 'cause this is quite a deal. I was on a carrier, the *Boxer*, and we'd go from Alameda to San Diego and back. And I'd get home to see my wife on the weekends and it was getting so when I first went aboard there, five yeomen and in about a year - I guess eight months later, I was down to two strikers, myself and two strikers. I had an admiral, a captain who's the chief of staff, a commander, his operations officer, and five lieutenants.

JP: This is between 1946 and 1947?

RB: Right.

JP: Okay.

RB: And so I just couldn't do it. I mean, I'd go - I put everything I had into it to try to make it work. So they were going to Hawaii and I told them - I waited 'til the last minute and I told them I was getting off the ship. My time was up, see, and they couldn't take me. The navy regulations said if you [*have*] less than three months to do and the ship wouldn't be back, I could get off. And I left them high and dry.

I got out of the navy. I think we went by the separation center because I worked with them. And I [*came*] back to the States, [*came*] back to the Midwest and I was going to stay with my dad and my mother.

JP: You decided to stay in the navy, though, after the war. It was a conscious decision.

RB: Yeah, I stayed in but I didn't want - I loved the navy, but I couldn't - I just couldn't take it [*any*] more.

JP: Okay.

RB: So I got out and my wife wanted me to get back in. Well, I'd asked this captain I worked for in...

JP: Why did your wife want you back in the navy?

RB: She liked the navy.

JP: Okay.

RB: And so she figured I could make a better living. I was going to live with my folks and they had a tavern in Missouri and she didn't want to raise my daughter in a tavern. So I said I'll go back to Washington to see this fellow, lieutenant - he was working for the chief of naval operations. I said I'll go back and see what I can do.

JP: By this time, it's what, it's the eighty-fifth day into...

RB: This is about eighty-five days. I had ninety days to get back in.

JP: Right.

RB: So I went to see this Lieutenant Burda was his name. And he was a wonderful guy. And I asked him - and he said, "Boy," he said, "I'll tell you what I'll do."

He wrote me a letter to the flag lieutenant for the CINCLANTFLT back in Norfolk. So I took the letter and I took it down there and he said, "I can't help you," he says, "you go over and see the personnel officer."

And I did. I was the chief yeoman. And he says, "I got a ship. I'll put you on that, I'll send you down south," he says, "it's up to you to get where you want to go."

So I got - I got on this ship and we went to Charleston, South Carolina, where I caught the ship yet. And it was based in Trinidad, British West Indies. So I went down to Trinidad because I was on the ship and I loved it on there. But I didn't have much work to do, so I went up to - we went from Trinidad to San Juan, towing barges of oil. And on that trip, I went up to the flag secretary's office and there was this Captain Hunter, and I always liked him. And he told me, he says, "Burr," he says, "where you at?"

And I says, "I'm on a tugboat out here."

He says, "You're on a tugboat? How'd you get on there?"

I says, "So I could get down here."

And so he said, "My yeoman's got to go back, he's in reserve from Boston. He's getting out. You get out and get your orders to come out here."

I told him, I said, "Captain, I'll get my family up here, lined up to come up here and then I'll be over."

And sure enough, I got transferred.

JP: So you transferred down to San Juan?

RB: Yeah. So I stayed in San Juan – I and my wife, we stayed there [a] normal tour, I think it was eighteen months there. And I met a lot of nice people there. I got out of there – I got transferred on and off! I went to Naples, Italy for a tour of duty, in that southern European command. We were communications ship for them. And I – oh, let's see, what were some of the other ships I was on? I was on the USS *Adirondack*, which was a communications ship, that's when we [were] over in Italy. And I had a tour of duty at Purdue University, Navy ROTC. And then I got a tour of duty at the Navy ROTC in Albuquerque, at the University of New Mexico. And after that, I retired out of there.

JP: What year was that?

RB: That was in 1963.

JP: Very good.

RB: And after I retired, I retired out of the navy and I went to work for the Santa Fe Railroad, in Albuquerque. And I spent twenty-two and a half years with them.

JP: And you retired...

RB: And then I retired and that's where I am today. [*My wife and I had seven more children, eight total, four boys and four girls.*]

JP: Very good. Well, I appreciate you very much taking the time this morning to be interviewed. We're very happy that you've done it. Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW